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INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 7465
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 8850
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 4899
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 0134
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 5538
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 3912
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 002146

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/30/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: URIBE CONTINUES DRIVE FOR POLITICAL REFORM

Classified By: Political Counselor John Creamer - Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

Government Coalition Signs "Transparency Pact"
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1. (C) On March 28, President Alvaro Uribe hosted eleven political party leaders from his Congressional coalition to sign a "transparency pact" promising maximum efforts to guarantee free and fair local elections in October--opposition parties did not participate. Party leaders from the U Party, Conservatives, Cambio Radical and eight smaller coalition parties agreed to vet all candidates for ties to armed or criminal groups, publicize all campaign contributions on the internet, reject all suspicious funds, and report any suspicious activities to authorities. The GOC invited opposition party leaders (Liberals and POLO) to sign the document, but they did not do so. Liberal Party leader Cesar Gaviria called the pact political theater; the GOC invited them to sign without giving them a chance to participate in drafting the document or reviewing its contents. Other opposition contacts told us the pact was devoid of new legal commitments, but said they would likely take a similar step. Copy of pact will to be faxed to WHA/AND.

Uribe Proposes Electoral Reform Legislation
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2. (C) The Uribe Administration and congressional coalition will also introduce an election reform bill immediately after Easter designed to eliminate the influence of armed groups in elections. In addition to expelling from office any elected official formally charged with ties to armed or criminal groups, the bill states that the accused official's party would immediately lose that seat and be prohibited from contesting the seat in the next election. Candidates expelled from a party for cause would be prevented from running on another party's slate for one election cycle. The bill would also empower electoral authorities to reject candidates who are potentially ineligible to run before they start campaigning rather than after they have been elected. Senator German Vargas Lleras (leader of Cambio Radical and likely 2010 presidential candidate) is coordinating sponsorship of the bill. The GOC's goal is to pass the bill before the October elections. Numerous contacts told us passage of the bill in time for October would be difficult.

Broad Political Reforms on Hold...for Now
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13. (C) Presidential Legal Advisor Mauricio Gonzalez told us the GOC introduced the transparency pact and electoral reform bill in an effort to limit illegal armed groups' interference in the October elections, as well as fraud. He said President Uribe and his cabinet also reviewed a possible political/constitutional reform package on March 27, but decided not to pursue that option at this time. Potential elements of such a package could include a shift to a parliamentary system, creation of a unicameral congress, institution of regional rather than national districts for senators, and requirements that political parties run candidates on "closed" party lists. Gonzalez said Uribe did not approve such a major reform package now, because he fears it could undermine the GOC position that Colombia's institutions are capable of managing the para-political scandal. Still, he predicted the para-political scandal in Congress would grow, further discrediting Congress and eventually forcing Uribe to advocate far-reaching reforms. Drucker